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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

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NSC FOR NEA STAFF

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HQ USAF FOR XXXX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
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CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

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SUBJECT: SPECIAL ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

U.S. Special Envoy Sen. George Mitchell to Israel, West Bank

Key stories in the media:

Israel Hayom reported that the visit of U.S. Special Envoy for Middle East Peace Senator George Mitchell to the region is the continuation of U.S. efforts to start negotiations between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. The daily and other leading media quoted a senior

American official as saying yesterday that the United States has not retreated from the demand that Israel freeze construction in the settlements (contradicting statements by Israeli sources -- see Ha'aretz below in this paragraph). The official was also quoted as saying that the U.S. does not accept preconditions for starting negotiations, a statement that Israel Hayom said was directed at the Palestinians. Israel Hayom quoted a senior American official as saying that October 18 -- the date set for the presentation of Mitchell's report to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton -- is not a deadline. The official was quoted as saying that an Israeli declaration on settlement construction will help enlist positive involvement by the Arab states, which may significantly advance the peace process. Israel Hayom further quoted the official as saying that the sides must start negotiations without delay -- but that this will not happen during Mitchell's visit, as the U.S. would have hoped. The Jerusalem Post reported that a "senior U.S. diplomat called on both sides to get down to business." Ha'aretz quoted sources in Jerusalem as saying that a temporary freeze of construction in settlements was effectively off the agenda, and that the Americans had dropped this demand. Ha'aretz quoted sources as saying yesterday that Abbas, whose standing among Palestinians has suffered dramatically in recent weeks, is expected to refuse the American request for an immediate return to negotiations without preconditions. Abbas has been harshly criticized for requesting a postponement of the U.N. discussion on the Goldstone report at the request of the United States.

Yediot reported that the U.S. administration has decided to freeze efforts to renew talks on the Israeli-Syrian track as it assesses that this channel is not ripe and in light of Syria's negative role in Iraq and its prevention of the prevention of a government in Lebanon.

Leading media reported that yesterday the U.N. Security Council decided to reject a Libyan request to hold a special session on the Goldstone report. However, the council decided to debate the report during the regular meeting of the council on the Middle East which will be move forward to next week. Major media reported that yesterday Hamas staged a rally in Gaza attended by families affected by Operation Cast Lead. The crowd was invited to throw shoes at a large poster of Abbas. Meanwhile Ha'aretz reported that Yasser Abed Rabbo, chairman of the PLO's Executive Committee, told Palestinian radio yesterday that the PA was mistaken in its approach to the report. "We have the courage to admit our mistake, and this mistake can be amended," Abed Rabbo said. The Jerusalem Post and other media quoted Hamas leaders as saying "that the movement's reconciliation talks with Fatah should be shelved over Abbas's treason over the Goldstone report."

King Abdullah II of Jordan was quoted as saying in an interview with Ha'aretz that the current diplomatic impasse sends the region "back into the darkness." The King was quoted as saying that he has raised the sanctity and sensitivity of Jerusalem with every Israeli prime minister, including Benjamin Netanyahu. He said that it "is important to understand the need of ending all settlement activities and other unilateral actions that threaten the identity of the holy city."

Leading media reported that Noam Shalit, the father of abducted IDF soldier Gilad Shalit, will meet with French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris today. Ha'aretz reported that Sarkozy recently sent a message to Syrian President Bashar Assad asking him to pressure the Hamas leadership in Damascus to close a deal for Shalit's release. Ha'aretz quoted diplomatic sources as saying that the Syrians passed the message to the head of the Hamas political wing in Damascus, Khaled Mashal.

The Jerusalem Post reported that PM Netanyahu has not appointed any minister in charge of Jerusalem, due to his hopes that the far-Right party National Union will join his government coalition.

Ha'aretz reported that some 3,000 Likud members converged on Samaria National Park in the northern West Bank yesterday in a demonstration of Israeli sovereignty in the region. The Likud members also sent a message to President Obama to "keep your hands off the Land of Israel." Ha'aretz reported that Knesset Member Danny Danon, who organized the trip, said in an interview to CNN: "I want to tell Obama we know there's no partner and your pressure is harmful to the

Jewish people ... this isn't Hollywood. You can't invent a partner. We have to do what's good for the Jewish people in its country." The Jerusalem Post quoted Danon as saying that he plans to press PM Netanyahu on the President's settlement freeze demand.

Yediot detailed the Foreign Ministry's secret internal memo that The Jerusalem Post said yesterday seeks to fashion a "whole new Israeli foreign policy." Yediot cited the document as saying (in free translation): "As far as Israel is concerned, there is no substitute for the special relationship with the United States. The U.S. undoubtedly is Israel's best friend in the world. However, the exclusive reliance on the U.S. is not healthy for both sides and is testing to the U.S. Israel must build a coalition with additional states on the basis of shared interests. This is how a circle of support for Israel will be strengthened and expanded. This will make things easier for the U.S. as well."

Ha'aretz quoted Israeli activists against the separation fence as saying that an IDF soldier was arrested Tuesday on suspicion of beating a Palestinian resident during a nighttime raid in the West Bank village of Bil'in on September 16.

The Jerusalem Post and Makor Rishon-Hatzofe reported that opposition leader and Kadima Knesset Member Tzipi Livni flew to the U.S. yesterday to be a guest of honor at two special events this week in which she will be honored for her work. First, she will receive the highest honor awarded by Yale University to foreigners for their work and inspiration and then, in Miami, she will attend a special event held by the International Women's Forum and enter its International Hall of Fame.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday Israeli diplomatic officials would not comment on claims made by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that several countries had offered to sell enriched uranium to his country. Maariv imagines Israeli society's reaction to the reality of an Iranian nuclear weapon.

All media prominently reported on yesterday's granting of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry to Professor Ada Yonath of the Weizmann Institute of Science (as co-recipient). In interviews with the media, Yonath, colleagues, and commentators voiced their concern about the future of scientific research in Israel.

U.S. Special Envoy Sen. George Mitchell to Israel, West Bank:

Block Quotes:

I. Watch Out for the Goldstoners

Senior commentator Ari Shavit wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (10/8): "Nobody knows yet when the next war will break out.

Maybe in a decade, maybe in a year, or maybe even next month. It is also not clear where the next war will erupt -- perhaps on the Gaza border, perhaps the West Bank, or maybe in Jerusalem. But it is already clear what the next war's name will be -- the Goldstone War. It will be the war brought upon us by the Goldstone report, Judge Goldstone and his Goldstoner followers. The report reflects both the Goldstoners' holy fury and their complete belief that the Palestinians can do no wrong. That belief is now endangering not only Israel but calm and stability. In their fanaticism and extremism, Goldstone and the Goldstoners have brought us closer to bloodshed."

II. Our Exclusive Right to Self-Defense

Liberal columnist Larry Derfner wrote in the conservative, independent Jerusalem Post (10/8): "Virtually all of Israel is now speaking in one voice against the Goldstone report, against any attempt to blame us over the war in Gaza. We've honed our message to a sharp point and, inspired by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's performance at the U.N., we're delivering it with just the right tone of outrage: How dare anyone deny us the right to self-defense! How dare anyone deny us the right to fight back against terrorism! Very nice. Puts everyone else on the defensive. The right to self-defense is up there with motherhood

and apple pie -- who's going to come out against it, especially for us, for Israel, for the Jews, for the people of the Holocaust? The right to self-defense -- perfect. But I'd like to ask: Do the Palestinians also have the right to self-defense? We probably wouldn't admit it out loud, but in our heads we would say -- again, in one voice, "No!" This is the Israeli notion of a fair deal. Here is our idea of the "laws of war": When Israeli bulldozers rolled across the border into Gazan villages and flattened house after house so Hamas wouldn't have them for cover after the IDF pulled out, that was self-defense. But if a Palestinian boy who'd lived in one of those houses threw a stone at one of the bulldozers, that was terrorism. The Goldstones of the world call this hypocrisy, a double standard. How dare they! Around here, we call it moral clarity."

III. You Worry about Nabatean Culture?

Conservative columnist Nadav Haetzni wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (10/8): "A mysterious gap appears between the attitude towards the destruction at the [world heritage site of] Avdat and the wreckage on the Temple Mount. While vestiges of the Nabatean civilization were found in Avdat, signs of lamented cultures and remnants of the most revered religious site of Judaism lie buried."

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